

***Oreochromis mossambicus* (Peters 1852)**  
**Mozambique Tilapia**



*Photo of breeding male Mozambique tilapia  
by Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures, Auburn University*

**Identification:** The body is dull yellow to olive green along the sides and grey on the back. The large, oblique mouth extends underneath the front of the eye (or beyond). In adult males, the body and fins are black, the upper lip is blue, the underside of the head is white, and the fins are edged in red. Females and non-breeding males are silver with two to five blotches along the midline. Grows to about 30 cm SL. Also called the Mozambique Mouthbrooder. Dorsal fin XV to XVII (10-12), anal rays III-IV (9-12), pectoral fin rays 14-15. Lateral scale rows 29-33. From Trewavas (1983), Page and Burr (1991), and Boschung and Mayden (2004).

**Native Range:** The species is from southeastern Africa (Page and Burr 1991). It occurs in fresh, brackish, and saline waters (Whitfield and Blaber 1979; Whitfield et al. 2006).

**Similar Species:** No tilapias are native to Florida, and no native species are similar to tilapias.

**Ecology:** The species is normally found in freshwater, but can live and breed in salt water (e.g., Salton Sea). Breeding males establish territories in shallow, weedy areas and excavate a shallow nest. Females are enticed onto the nest where they deposit their eggs then take eggs and sperm into their mouth where the embryos are incubated. Sexual maturity is obtained at lengths of 12-14 cm TL, a size roughly equivalent to about six months after hatching. The species is an opportunistic carnivore. From Boschung and Mayden (2004).

**Nonindigenous Occurrences:** Within Florida, the species was first introduced into and became established in Dade County during the 1960s (Courtenay and Stauffer 1990). It now ranges north along the Atlantic coast to Satellite Beach. Along the Gulf coast of Florida, the species has been documented in the Caloosahatchee drainage, Charlotte Harbor, and Tampa Bay (Courtenay et al. 1974).

Outside Florida, it is established in six states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawai'i, Idaho, and Texas). The species was formerly considered locally established, but no longer extant in Georgia, Montana, and North Carolina. It has been reported from Alabama, Illinois, and New York, although the status of those populations is unclear.

